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FREE PUBLIC LIBRARIES FOR CANADA.

Working-Men's Prize Essays.

(Reprinted from "The Citizen," Jan. 14, 1882.)

In order to stimulate thought and enquiry on the important question of Free Public Libraries, the proprietors of THE CITIZEN offered two separate sums (\$10 and \$5) for competition to workmen, mechanics or non-professional writers, on the subject of "FREE LIBRARIES FROM A WORKMAN'S STANDPOINT."

The Essays were submitted to three gentlemen, who kindly acted as Judges, viz., Ald. J. Taylor, Mr. J. Hughes, Inspector of Schools, and Mr. J. W. Bengough, Editor of *Grip*, who awarded the prizes, as follow:—

1st.—T. K. Henderson, Compositor.

2nd.—H. M. Evans, Compositor.

3rd.—H. M. Williams, Law Clerk.

The following is a reprint from THE CITIZEN of the two first Essays. The third will appear in the columns of THE CITIZEN in the second week of February.

FIRST PRIZE ESSAY.

(T. K. HENDERSON.)

That it is the duty of government to provide for the people every means of education that it can possibly command, is an assertion that few will be hardy enough to deny, especially at a period in the history of civilization fraught with events of such vast import, and big with the responsibilities of the future. The unprecedented growth upon this continent of great cities, which are becoming the centres and hives of an active, intelligent, and working population, and where—whether for good or evil—mind is clashing with mind, and thought with thought; and where all social, political, and religious questions are discussed with a freedom over which the shackles of bigotry and intolerance can never again be thrown, make it of paramount importance to the State, as well as to the individuals who compose it, that this ever-augmenting volume of opinion should be directed into a healthy channel; that advancing intelligence should march side by side with an increasing population; that or-

der should reign supreme, and license give place to law.

It has been justly said by an eminent authority that, "By knowledge men become easy to lead, but difficult to drive; easy to govern, but impossible to enslave." If this be so, the spread of knowledge becomes a prime factor in the problem of good government, and renders the control of the people a matter of comparative ease. Hitherto, in most civilized nations, the education of the masses has been most dangerously and criminally neglected. Knowledge, and consequently power—for the words are nearly synonymous—was looked upon as the hereditary right of a favoured few, who traded upon the ignorance they fostered, and clambered to wealth and station upon the debasement of their fellow-men.

No doubt much of this selfish exclusiveness has of late years given way before the steady march of progress. The

grim fortress of ignorance has fallen like a Bastile before the shock of freedom. The barriers that encircled the temple of knowledge have been broken down by the repeated assaults of a people clamouring for their God-given and legitimate rights. Much, it is true, has been done by governments within the century to atone in some measure for the wilful indifference of the past, but more remains to be accomplished. The fetters have been struck from the manacled wrists of the slave, but the thralldom of ignorance still hampers our minds, and ought to crimson our cheeks with shame.

The government of this country has, to some extent, acknowledged the sacred duty of giving to its people a free and sound education, and the public schools of Canada are a recognition of the right of every man to be taught his duty to his country and his God. In this it has done well. The child is father of the man, and unless the ancient proverb of training him in the right path has lost its original force, it is still a matter of supreme moment that a right bias should be given to his dawning intellect. Although not prepared to endorse all the extravagant encomiums bestowed upon them, I believe the public schools have laid a solid foundation, strong and deep enough whereon to raise a goodly superstructure, and build up a useful, moral, and religious life. But, having laid the foundation, and raised the walls of the human fabric to the level of society, the work is unfortunately arrested just where it should have commenced; the young fledgling has been thrust forth from the parent nest where he has been fed, and fattened, and *crammed*, to be henceforth nourished as best he may upon such husks of knowledge as the daily paper, with its current catalogue of crime, or the American novel, *et hoc genus omne*. What wonder if in such circumstances the effects of early training are soon obliterated and lost, the "little knowledge" which we are told is a dangerous thing, becoming of small account in the guidance of maturer years. It is very much as if a man, having laid the foundation of

his house sure and solid, and lifted his walls to the air and sunshine, had then laid aside his tools, and invited the snows and frosts of a Canadian winter to complete his task. Surely it is not politic or wise, that, having given the young citizen a taste of the sweets of knowledge, his manhood should be condemned to starve, or, as I have said, fed upon the rottenness of the cheap literature of the day; because to this we are inevitably driven, circumstances utterly preventing me, as well as hundreds of others, from purchasing books worthy of perusal. The wants of the house I live in are too clamorous to be evaded; the tenant of the mansion—the *egomet*—is condemned to exist upon half rations of unwholesome food.

I protest against this. As a workingman and on behalf of my fellow workmen of Toronto, I protest against being starved while my children are fed, and I appeal, on the part of an influential and growing class, for the establishment in this city of a Free Public Library, worthy of a rich and important city, and capable of continuing and carrying on in our riper years the good work commenced in childhood for I hold that such an Institution would be to the working man the complement of the education bestowed upon his youth. We have at present no means of obtaining knowledge such as this would afford, and in default of it our working classes must assuredly grow up ignorant of their duties as responsible beings, and unable successfully to resist the influence of the evil that surround them.

I presume that the authorities of this country, whether Dominion, Provincial or Municipal, desire to see growing up in their midst an intelligent and Christian people, whose lives are ordered upon sound principles of morality and religion, and who may form the basis of a free and happy commonwealth. To this end no effort should be spared to indoctrinate them with the eternal principles of truth and justice, by familiarizing them with the thoughts of the good and the great, leading them to the springs of inquiry, and providing them with guides

and teachers through the devious paths of life. Many and praiseworthy attempts are no doubt made to improve the condition and raise the moral tone of the working man. Societies of all kinds for such objects abound. Lecturers on every conceivable topic swarm in our midst, and the clergy of all creeds—and according to their light—are not slow to lend a willing hand in the work; but, after all, the combined influence of all the machinery in motion is but little compared to that which a Free Public Library would exercise upon the thoughts and minds of our working men. Lecturers are very attractive and useful in their way, but they must be paid, and I cannot afford to pay them. The Shaftesbury Hall celebrities, annually provided by that institution, scatter abroad some crumbs of knowledge, but I cannot gather them—their knowledge is sold, and I am too poor to buy it, and to give it away without money and without price is a step in the onward direction that such establishments have yet to take. I present myself at the door, but not having the silver talisman that commands an entrance, it is closed against me.

But, while not disparaging the work of such societies, I apprehend that even could we take advantage of them, the Institution whose claims I am considering would far exceed them all in its influence for good upon the working men. Therefore, *O Patres Conscripti!* I appeal to you. You provide for our physical wants. You give us parks wherein to refresh our weary limbs, hospitals to heal our aching bones, an alms house in our dire necessity, and gaols when our shortcomings deserve them; why, then, refuse to minister to the nobler part of our being? Why refuse to unroll before our eyes the “ample page of knowledge, rich with the spoils of time?” Is it not a stinging disgrace that in this flourishing city of Toronto, nay, in this broad Dominion of Canada, there is *not a single Free Library?* Five hundred years before our Lord, Hipparchus opened the first library in Athens, into which every citizen could freely enter, and feed his mind upon the literary trea-

sures collected there. We have advanced two thousand five hundred years beyond Hipparchus, but it is with a retrogressive motion, and we are not yet where the Athenians commenced. Is this a progress calculated to inspire us with satisfaction? Assuredly not! and yet the age is brimful of intelligence—directed, it is to be feared, mainly into the channel of amassing wealth, until man himself—the creator of this wealth—is in a fair way of degenerating into a machine.

What, then, would be *the value and influence of a Public Library upon the working classes of this City?* Much every way. Good books would supplement and complete an education begun and left unfinished; they would wean them from the low temptations to which they are peculiarly subject, and to which the rich, encased in their mail of wealth, are impervious. The whiskey shop, the low theatre, and the dens of vice from which our reformation societies desire to lure the workman, would lose some of their attractions; the instincts of his better nature would be fostered and brought into action, and his thoughts lifted up to that all-hail hereafter, when he might hope to change the working garb for the badge of a higher destiny. The perusal of good books would also strengthen and build up his religious character, and as man is a religious animal, it is of no small consequence of what sort his religion may be. But, paradoxical as this statement may appear in this “city of churches,” I fear there are many over whose lives religion of any kind has no perceptible control. Indeed, I know many who openly disavow any belief in Christianity, and who deny the existence of a future or a God. Infidelity and atheism, which used to be looked upon as the exclusive property of philosophic sceptics, are permeating through the lower strata of society, and what shall be the end thereof? Why is it that with so much theological teaching, Sunday sermons, and ministerial efforts to improve our moral and religious condition, infidelity is openly and freely avowed? Why is it that a short time since, had a bomb-

shell exploded in our midst it could not have caused greater consternation than the arrival of a book which audaciously crossed the frontier like an invading force, and took the town by storm. The churches took alarm—ministers were up in arms—Christianity was in danger! a poor thing it would be if M. Voltaire's little book were so formidable a foe—and the authorities were adjured to seize and strangle the daring wretch who had ventured within the hallowed precincts of the city of churches. But why this outcry and alarm? M. Voltaire is not by any means so destructive an opponent of Christianity as some whose works are welcome guests in the libraries of the rich, and upon whom the Minister of Customs would not dare to lay his hands. He was too outspoken to do much harm. He was a man without fixed principles, who wrote for fame and from a policy that made him write verses in praise of the Virgin and the Saviour, while attacking Christianity in private. He came at a period when faith and morality were equally weak, and he brought with him one of those sarcastic and sceptical dispositions which are of every time, though they can only fulfil their destructive task at an epoch of general weakness and degradation. But has our morality sunk so low, and is our Christianity become so corrupt, that Voltaire's wit should fill us with alarm? If so, it becomes the teachers of the day to cast about and see whither they are driving; if not, why this much ado about nothing? I allude to this to show that *popular ignorance* lies at the base of the dangers we may apprehend on account of religion, and that if infidelity should rankle in our midst, it is not because Voltaire, in the philosophic retirement of Cirey, sneered at and dazzled the eighteenth century, but because we have not been true to our times, and let in the light God has given us, upon the minds of our people. Give our intelligent mechanics the use of a good Library, of which they will not be slow to avail themselves, and I care not if all the French philosophers, with Voltaire and Rousseau at their head, were scattered along the sidewalks, thick

as leaves in Vallambrosa. It is not, perhaps, a matter of surprise that amongst the clerics the arrival of Voltaire should have occasioned such profound alarm, as I suppose they are aware of the dangerous nature of the materials amongst which he would be thrown; but it surely ought to awaken in them a desire to crush the snake of infidelity and irreligion that is lifting its hydra head amongst us, by turning our thinking and speculating faculties into a right direction, and providing—so far as their influence can go—healthy food for thought. We live in times that are pregnant with great social, political, and religious changes, and in a country where, whether educated or ignorant, the working classes must exercise much influence in the near future. It becomes us, then, as a people—yet in leading-strings it is true—but still making rapid strides towards manhood, to see that our boasted morality and religion is not a mere sham—a *vox et pre-terea nihil*. By and by the working classes of Canada will be the actual rulers of the country, and universal suffrage will take its place among our laws. Into whose hands will this power be entrusted?

It was said of every private in the armies of the great Napoleon that he carried a marshal's baton in his knapsack. It might be said with equal truth, that every young Canadian carries a premiership in his brain. A few days since the grave closed over the mortal remains of one who, from the lowest rank of society, rose to the proudest position he could fill in one of the foremost nations of the earth; and in our own country the late head of the Cabinet had once been a worker in stone. What was the influence of books upon the lives of these men, both of whom were plucked from the common crowd? They ennobled and elevated and refined, just as they ennoble and elevate and refine every mind that yields itself to the influence they possess. Not that every man can hope to be a Garfield or a Mackenzie, or a Chatham or a Burke, but he may hope that the God-given faculties within him shall be expanded and made productive

of good to society and to himself. To accomplish this noble purpose, and lift himself to a higher plane, he needs more than his narrow circumstances can supply, and it is the obvious duty of the state under which he lives, which claims him as her subject, and which has been enriched by his toil, to place within his reach sound wisdom and instruction, and sure guides to virtue. There is a Latin sentence (*Vox populi, vox Dei*) much used, and more abused, than which a greater lie was never penned. Should it ever become true I know not, but I do know that it never can be true so long as ignorance darkens our minds, and the gates of knowledge are closed upon us. The influence of good books upon my own mind is, I suppose, very much like what they produce upon the minds of others. They lead me, if but for a little while, out of the dusty and sweltering paths of daily toil, into the cool and shady groves of poesy and romance; they make me master of all that has passed in the history of my race; they widen my conceptions of man, elevate my thoughts, sweeten the cares of life, reconcile me to the accidents of my lot, humanize my feelings, subdue my passions, and enlarge my heart. I cannot rise from their perusal without feeling better, and I apprehend that if the study of such books as a well-selected library would afford was encouraged, we should have less occasion for the frantic and often futile efforts of moral and religious reformers.

From statistical information obtained by Alderman Hallam during a recent tour in England, I find that in the United Kingdom there are at present many free libraries, supported by a rate not exceeding one penny in the pound. In Birmingham there is much interest taken in the free library movement. The present number of volumes is 86,000, and the reference library includes 44,000 books; the monthly average of books lent out is 35,000, while the number consulted for purely reference purposes is 21,000 per month. There is also an art gallery and museum here, under the management of

the library committee, all of which are well patronized by the working people.

Manchester has a fine free library system, the total number of books being 147,631,—64,077 for reference, and 83,554 for lending purposes. The monthly average of reference books consulted is 19,058, and the monthly average of books lent out is 71,411. In Manchester they have also a very fine museum at Peel Park.

Bradford has a good free library, the reference portion containing 11,152 volumes, and the lending department 134,000 volumes, and other branches about 8,000 books. The total consultations of reference books last year was 217,598, and the issues from the lending departments 1,081,871, and the specification books were evidently fairly attractive, for during the year there were 11,355 consultations. In connection with the free library there are news rooms for males and females.

In Liverpool the history of the free library has been one of continual progress from its commencement. It has a well-patronized reference library, the average daily consultations during the year past being 2,057. The number of volumes in the lending departments is 43,285, and the issues during the past year have been 436,415. The daily average issue of magazines for the same period has been 231, or 65,056 in the aggregate. The average issue of weekly periodicals was 213,975, or 760 per day. There is here, as in other places, a stock of "Patents for Inventions" volumes, which during the year have been consulted 13,913 times. In connection with the library there is a large and magnificent museum, which, during the 213 days it was open during the last year, had an average daily attendance of 2,349. The fact that this combination of places received the popular patronage which the figures indicate, shows the way in which they are appreciated. Indeed, as a simple matter of common sense, they would not be kept open—certainly not the library and reading-room—if the rate-payers did not feel

convinced that they were worth the money expended on them.

In Preston there is a free library of 9,075 volumes, with a reading-room attached, chiefly patronized by the working classes.

There are many similar instances in other towns, but the limits of this paper forbid my giving them in detail. It is evident, however, that the working classes of the great English towns appreciate the advantages they enjoy, and there is no reason to suppose that their brethren of Toronto,—hailing, as most of them do, from the mother country—would be a whit behind them in this respect.

When we turn our eyes to the neighbouring Republic, we find that the free library system is almost an old institution, all its great towns being possessed of this invaluable means of extending knowledge. From the last annual report of the public library of Cincinnati, kindly sent me by C. W. Merrill, Esq., the Librarian—who states that *a large proportion of those who use the library are working people*—we learn that the library now contains 124,495 books, and 13,089 pamphlets. The Government of France have made a gift to the library during the year of a complete set of the French patent reports, numbering 162 volumes, and the Imperial Government of Vienna have made a similar donation. Total use of the library during the past year has been 802,356 books and periodicals, an increase of 32,989 over 1879-80. The number of volumes issued for home use was 253,970, and the number delivered for reference, 148,947. The average number of books lent daily for home use was 824, and the number delivered for use in the reading-rooms, 410 per day. The expenditure of this library for the year was \$55,864.94. The books issued for home use during the year, exclusive of fiction, numbered 45,127 volumes, on the following subjects:—Philology, Theology, Philosophy and Education, Biography, History, Geography and Travels, Politics and Commerce, Polygraphy, Science and Arts, Poetry and Drama; and the number of

books on the same subjects issued in the reading-rooms during the year was 98,662. From these figures we see that a vast number of books on all conceivable subjects (exclusive of fiction) have been issued to and read by the people of Cincinnati, and no small proportion of them by the working classes of that city.

J. N. Larned, Esq., the Superintendent of the Young Men's Association of Buffalo, informs me that the Association circulates about 100,000 volumes annually, and that a fair proportion of working men are amongst its members. The Grosvenor Library of Buffalo—a free reference library—is also well patronized.

From the exhaustive report of 1187 pp., on the public libraries in the United States (1876), courteously sent me by the Hon. the Minister of Education, Washington, I find that *Free Town Libraries*, comprising those partly or wholly supported by a direct or indirect tax, or by municipal grants under authority of a general State law, exist in almost every State. In *New Hampshire* there are 13 town libraries, and the aggregate circulation was 191,601 volumes. There are over 127 free town libraries in *Massachusetts*, and 3,026,000 volumes have been taken out within the year by readers. In fifteen years the number of free town libraries has been nearly trebled; the number of volumes much more than quadrupled; the yearly additions have increased more than six-fold; and more than six times as many books were taken out by readers than nine years before. Eight public libraries exist in *Maine*, formed under an Act of 1854, granting a sum not exceeding \$1 on each of its ratable polls to establish a library, and 25 cents on each poll thereafter for its increase and maintenance. The average circulation is 97,700 volumes. *Vermont* has four libraries established under a similar enactment in 1867. In *Ohio* there are nine public libraries. 815,373 volumes were lent within the year. The levy for these must not exceed one-half mill on the dollar. An Act of 1872 authorized the establishment of free

public libraries and reading-rooms in *Wisconsin*, at a tax not exceeding one mill on the dollar. Four libraries were organized under this law. *Connecticut* has four libraries, with a circulation of 37,000 volumes. In *Iowa* there is one library, established in 1873. Three free libraries in *Indiana* were organized in 1873 from a tax of two mills on the dollar, and in 1874-5 159,558 books were lent to readers. *Illinois* contains 13 free libraries, which lent within the year 301,538 volumes. The frontier state of *Texas* is the pioneer in the free library movement in the southern states, the library of Galveston having been established in 1874. In 1875 it numbered 12,000 volumes, and 12,500 were taken out by readers.

Besides the free town library system, which pervades the entire Republic, the government has also provided State and Territorial Libraries, of which I find there were 47 in existence at the date of this report. The State libraries are for reference purposes, and not for the circulation of books, but they are free to all persons without exception, who have the privilege of reading any book for which they may enquire. There are no restrictions to repulse any person decently clad and of good behaviour from using a State library. The general department of the State libraries includes for the smaller libraries chiefly State papers, with the most necessary encyclopædias, and works of reference on statistics, political economy and history, for the use of the legislature. The larger libraries employ their larger appropriations in the purchase of books from a wider range, aiming not to supply the direct needs of the legislator, only, but to respond to the requirements and tastes of a cultivated people, looking forward to such measure of completeness in every department as the means at their disposal will allow. The number of volumes in the State and Territorial Libraries was 833,219, ten of them having over 30,000 volumes each, and only four of them are in cities of over 50,000, the remaining 42 being in relatively small cities.

With regard to the class of books provided in those libraries, an opinion of the character of one library is expressed in a report from its librarian, in which he "congratulates the legislature on the number of works to be found in the library adapted to the wants of the agriculturist, the merchant, the banker and the statesman." Another report says, "The library is specially designed to contain books on legislation, government, politics, history, statistics and political economy." A third report observes, "A glance over the purchases will show that the mechanics and engineers' call can now be gratified." Another great feature of the free library system in the United States is the common school library, but as we have already something of this kind existing in Canada, I need not refer to any statistics concerning them.

The public libraries in ten of the principal cities, are *practically open to all readers*, and are extensively used. There are in *Baltimore* 28 public libraries, containing 1000 volumes and upwards, headed by the magnificent institution founded by Mr. Peabody in 1857, who gave for its foundation \$1,400,000. It is used entirely for reference, and is open free to everybody. Not more than one-tenth of the reading here is of fiction. *Boston* and its vicinity contains 49 libraries of 1000 volumes and upwards. *Brooklyn*, 15; *Charleston*, 4; *Chicago*, 19, including that founded by Mr. Newberry, at a cost of \$4,000,000, which it is expected will be the largest reference library in the country. *Cincinnati* has 22 libraries. The public library here is open on Sundays. The librarian says: "Certainly no one will visit our various reading-rooms on Sunday, and observe the large attendance of the young men of the city; the earnest and thoughtful attitude of by far the larger portion of them, and the quiet and decorum which everywhere prevails, can fail to see that the library, with its Sunday reading, is exerting a powerful influence for good upon the morals of the community." *New York City* contains no less than 70 libraries connected with various institu-

tions, including the princely foundations of Mr. Astor and Mr. Lenox, whose noble collections are within reach of all. *Philadelphia* has 72 libraries of over 1,000 volumes, amongst them is the Friends' Free Library, to which the workmen from the numerous factories of Germantown freely resort, the library offering a counter attraction to the taverns of the village. There, fiction is entirely excluded, and the moral tone of the books assured before placing them on the shelves. *St. Louis* possesses 15 libraries, and *San Francisco* 14. Altogether, we find from this valuable report that there are in the United States no less a number than 3,647 public libraries of 300 volumes and upwards, and nearly all of this vast machinery for the extension of knowledge has been set in motion during the last five and twenty years.

I regret that the limits of this paper will only permit me to glance at these details, but I should hope that enough has been given to show the vast superiority that the Americans enjoy over the people of this country, and to stimulate our rulers into some attempt to lessen the disproportion that exists between us.

On the spread of free public libraries in other countries I have not space to dwell, but I may mention that 16 out of the 29 states of *Mexico* have such institutions, the principal being the Biblioteca Nacional of Mexico, and the Cinco de Mayo of the same city. This latter is open to the public every day from 8 a.m. until 10 p.m., and is constantly attended by people from all classes of society, but principally by artisans and poor scholars from the national schools.

In *Brazil*, the most important library is the National Public Library, containing 120,000 printed volumes, and free to the public. The aggregate number of volumes in all the libraries of the empire accessible to the public is 460,272, and they were attended by 85,044 persons.

As a vivid illustration of the spread of Western ideas in regard to popular education, the free public library recently

established at Tokio, in *Japan*, deserves to be mentioned. It is the first in which foreign books were to constitute a feature. It is now temporarily bestowed in the ancient temple of Confucius, and was opened to the public in 1875, and is free to all persons, native or foreign. In general the books are not to be taken from the building, but certain specified classes may, with the sanction of the Minister of Education, be permitted to borrow from the library.

Turning our eyes from far Japan to Ireland, the *Globe* correspondent, now travelling in the West, tells us that *Shigo* "contains a free public library—a feature that Toronto with ten times its population and probably fifty times its wealth cannot boast. Our city fathers and public spirited citizens may well be ashamed of the contrast. It was originated by donations, a grant of money being voted by the corporation to pay running expenses."

Thus, wherever we look, amongst widely diversified peoples, and nations the most remote, we find that books are universally acknowledged as the great teachers, and that without them we cannot hope to keep pace with the progress of the age. We should no longer, then, seek to evade the responsibilities which have been placed upon us of this passing generation. One of the most promising institutions yet born into the world must be bequeathed to our successors as an instrument always working in the direction of moral and social development. This one secular institution which encourages self-development as an aim should be especially favoured in the times upon which we have fallen. Who has not had moments of scepticism touching the solid advantages to humanity of the mechanical triumphs our generation has seen? They have created a host of new desires to be gratified, of unimagined luxuries to stimulate the fierce competitions which thrust the weakest to the wall. But we cannot help entertaining Mr. Mill's painful doubt whether all the splendid achievements of physics and chemistry have yet lightened the toil of a single human

being. If we would bind all the Titanic forces now at work in wholesome service to the higher interests of our race, it must be done by a commensurate expansion of the means of popular education. The best use we can make of the stage coach of our ancestors is to carry us to the railway station, and we can best employ their precious legacy of a free school as a conveyance to the free library. It will benefit many of its supporters through the minister's sermon and the physician's practice; the editor's leader will lead towards sounder conclusions; no attainable statistics will measure its work. There are no figures that will tell us what portion of the intelligence of the community would have lain dormant without it, nor can we estimate the wonderful results of this gift of literature upon the masses of the people. It would act and re-act upon our successors in a way that we can scarcely anticipate. As the varied intelligence which books can supply shall be more and more wisely assimilated, the essential elements of every political and social question may be confidently submitted to our instructed common sense. Let us labour then to lay the foundation in this wealthy city of Toronto of this crowning department in our apparatus of popular education. Unlike all other public charities, the free library is equally generous to those who have and to those who lack. It cares as tenderly for the many as for the few, and removes some of those painful contrasts in human opportunity which all good men are anxious to rectify, for "books" says Milton, "are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them, to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are. . . . A good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life!"

With regard to the *ways and means* to be adopted for the successful carrying out of this project, I feel I cannot do

better than embody in this paper Mr. Hallam's scheme, which I have no doubt could be easily carried into execution. He says:—"Let the Council petition the Ontario Legislature to pass a Library Act similar to that of England, enabling municipalities of cities, towns, and villages, on the vote of the people, to impose a rate of not less than one-half mill on the dollar for the purpose of forming and maintaining free public libraries, and acquiring by bequests, real estate, books, and money, and the holding of the same by the people for library purposes, with full power to hypothecate part of this rate for a number of years so that the money necessary for the wants of the people in this direction should be supplied at once. This would give grand and immediate results, and not be burdensome to the taxpayers. Such a rate would produce annually, according to our present assessment of \$54,000,000, the sum of \$27,000. We could borrow, say \$225,000, which at 4½ per cent. interest, ¾ of 1 per cent. sinking fund, would pay the principal in less than 40 years. The annual charge at rate of 5¼ per cent. (including sinking fund) would be \$11,812.50, leaving a balance of \$15,187.50 for the purchase of books, reviews, magazines, and newspapers, for paying salaries, lighting, heating, and otherwise maintaining the library. We could spend for a central site and a good handsome building, adapted for the requirements of a city like Toronto, with reading and lecture rooms, say \$150,000, with the balance, \$75,000, we could purchase at once from fifty to sixty-five thousand volumes of printed books."

I have no hesitation in saying that the ratepayers will cheerfully vote the money. 'A free public library established on this basis for Toronto!' Aye or no!"

(Signed)

"LIBER."

SECOND PRIZE ESSAY.

(H. M. EVANS.)

The importance of preserving records of events of national interest was early recognized, and in Egypt these records were written on papyrus leaves in hieroglyphics; in Assyria they were inscribed in cuneiform characters on clay cylinders, and placed in the temples and public treasuries to be brought out and read on stated occasions for the benefit and enlightenment of posterity. In later times the thoughts of poets and sages were enshrined in the Library at Alexandria, which was ultimately burned by the Mohammedans and its contents destroyed or scattered, never again to be recovered. This holocaust has been regarded by many as one of the causes of the ignorance and superstition which prevailed during the dark ages. Nothing could possibly demonstrate more strikingly the value of such collections of the thoughts of great men than the darkness which swept over the land, while these grand ideas and logical conclusions were being thought out again. When the ideas of theologians, moralists, and philosophers were once more wrought into words, the books containing them were collected and carefully preserved in the libraries attached to the monasteries and different universities, which were then the centres of education and learning. Some idea of the value attached to such works may be formed by a glance into the libraries which existed at that period. The huge tomes of vellum or parchment, laboriously copied out by studious monks, were placed on shelves to which they were secured by a short chain, only long enough to enable the student who wished to consult one of them to lay it on a moveable stand and read it there. Such literary treasures were considered much too valuable to be allowed to be taken out of the custody of the librarian, who was held responsible for the safe keeping of the volumes under his charge. Several examples of these chained libraries are yet extant; one at the

cathedral at Hereford (Eng.) contains about 400 volumes, whose carefully-preserved but well-thumbed pages testify to the diligence with which they were perused by the students of those days. With the introduction of printing came a spread of education and intelligence that surprised even the most sanguine reformers, and collections of books, which were thus brought within the reach of private individuals, became more common, instead of being, as heretofore, limited almost exclusively to rich religious institutions. As the wave of education spread wide and wider, sweeping ignorance, superstition and vice before it, libraries were formed in many of the large centres of Europe industry, the shelves of which were supplemented from time to time by bequests and gifts from private individuals who were sufficiently wise to foresee the inestimable benefits that must inevitably follow a more general acquaintance on the part of the public with the works of their favourite authors. As time rolled on it speedily became evident that the libraries in existence did not nearly satisfy the requirements of the age, and efforts were made to establish free libraries in different cities. In Germany and France the idea has been carried out with such earnestness that now nearly every town of any importance has its free library as a matter of course, just as it has a town hall, a church or a school. In France especially is this the case, there are free libraries in every town worthy of the name, with sub-depositories at convenient intervals, which have elevated the standard of popular education more rapidly and surely than any other method could have done. The vast strides that France continues to make in matters of technical education and the superiority of her artistic productions are no doubt due in a great measure to the prevalence of free libraries. England, also, though far behind her con-

tinental neighbours, has numerous similar institutions. The nuclei of many of these were formed by the accumulated donations of private individuals to institutions supported by voluntary contributions, which was the usual mode by which they were kept up until comparative late years. It was not till 1849* that Wm. Ewart, Esq., M. P. for Dumfries boroughs, succeeded, after encountering much opposition, in getting a resolution passed in the House of Commons to appoint a Select Committee to enquire into the existence of the public libraries of Great Britain and also to consider the best means of extending libraries free at all times to the public. This committee, after examining a number of witnesses and taking a deal of evidence, reported in effect that the libraries in existence were not such as would satisfy the national requirements in this respect, and were extremely disproportionate to the wealth and resources of the Kingdom; and that not only on the continent of Europe, but even in the United States, the contrast was greatly against them. The facts elicited by the committee did much to awaken a public interest in the matter, and twelve months later the honourable member for Dumfries boroughs was successful in getting a Bill passed by the Imperial Parliament, the object of which was to authorize Town Councils to levy a rate not exceeding one half-penny in the pound and devote it to the establishment and maintenance of free public libraries. Advantage was immediately taken of the provisions of this Act by the Manchester Corporation, which was the first to avail itself of this beneficent statute; their example was immediately followed by other towns, but it was speedily found that the comparatively trifling sums thus raised were out of proportion to the object sought to be attained, and further that the Act contained many useless restrictions which militated against the proper working of the principle sought to be extended. This Act was therefore repealed, and a fresh enactment passed, giving a much

wider scope and better facilities to the corporations than those contained in that of 1850. The public feeling in this matter soon grew beyond the narrow limits prescribed by the second Act, and various amendments of a more liberal character have been made from time to time in its provisions, the wisdom of which are clearly manifest to any one who cares to study for a moment the progress the free library movement is making in the United Kingdom.

The United States of America has also made great strides in this direction, and the city of Boston is now in a position to boast of having the largest free library in the world.* The advantage of such an institution to the city is shown by its superiority of municipal government and general intelligence, as compared with other less favoured cities. In January, 1880, there were no less than 3,776 public libraries in the United States, containing over 300 volumes each—the total being 14,500,000 volumes. In Texas also the inhabitants have recognized the advantages accruing from such institutions so clearly that they have not hesitated to avail themselves of the provisions of a recent enactment whereby they can impose a tax for library purposes at the will of the Council. In the Southern States, where one would scarce look for a large reading public, they are provided with civic machinery for the establishment of libraries, and many cities possess well-chosen and increasing collections of books for the free use of every ratepayer. In Mexico the importance of libraries is so well recognized that every publisher is compelled to furnish two copies of each book published, free to the public library. This privilege is retained by five libraries in Great Britain, and it has become an established custom for publishers to give copies of each new book to the leading libraries. To return to the United States, it will be found that the source of revenue of the free libraries in the large cities is variously derived from the Board of Education,

* Ald. Hallam's Tract.

*See Ald Taylor's Tract.

City Library Funds, City Appropriations, and the Dog Tax. In Maine State the Act provides for assessing \$1 per head for founding the library, and 25c. per head for its maintenance; Vermont, \$1, and 50c. for maintenance; Connecticut, the same; Ohio and Iowa, half a mill in the dollar; Wisconsin, one mill; Illinois, from 1-5 to 2 mills in the dollar. Alderman Taylor has collected statistics from 26 English towns, in which the public feeling on the matter of the establishment of free libraries was tested with the following results: Six adopted the Act unanimously; four found one dissentient; one town of 400,000 (Manchester), 40 dissentients; in the remainder it was adopted by such overwhelming majorities that no poll was demanded.

In Canada, which had the start of the Mother Country in the establishment of rate-supported schools, it seems strange that the wisdom of the establishment of public libraries should be questioned even for a moment. In the Old Country the School Boards were the outcome of the increased intelligence arising from the use of public libraries, and it will be most extraordinary if a country which thus early recognized the necessity of affording educational facilities to its children should fail to see the unspeakable advantages accruing to the youthful residents therein from the extension of its educational facilities, by placing within the immediate reach of its youth a means of innocent recreation and also of acquiring information on various topics. The immense value of free libraries to the Dominion can scarce be overestimated, for though, in a comparatively new country, muscle is needed to perform the hard manual labour incidental to clearing land and bringing it into cultivation, yet if the efforts of the settlers be not wisely directed their exertions will not bear fruit commensurate to their labours, and they will ultimately have the mortification of seeing other communities springing up around them and outstripping them in the struggle for superiority. When a new settlement is founded, a school is erected as a matter of

course, but after the juveniles have exhausted this means of acquiring information and have grown old enough to work, they are supposed to be able to provide what further instruction they need for themselves. The number of moral and intellectual wrecks drifting about the different towns fails to convince the hard-headed city fathers of the fallacy of such an idea. It is true that in some cases young men manage to get on without any assistance from such institutions, but who knows how much easier the task would have been with such aid? Young people have not always the foresight to see, after they once get out of school, that any future instruction will be necessary to their advancement in after life, and frequently waste their time in profitless amusements, ultimately developing into mere loafers, sinking lower and lower in ignorance and vice as they forget the precepts inculcated into them at school. In after life people's ideas upon the different subjects studied at school become more and more indistinct as time rolls on, unless occasionally brightened up by coming in contact while reading with incidents calculated to impress what they have learned on their minds and even give them a wider insight into the application of the first principles they learned in childhood.* Every one must admit this, and among the unbiassed, thoughtful ratepayers it must be considered cheaper and safer to pay for the enlightenment, than for the ignorance of the people, and better to induce working folk to spend their spare time in reading books, newspapers, &c.,—even if provided at the public expense—than to allow them, as per the old economically-idiotic plan, to stand at street corners, or ramble up and down sidewalks, or steep themselves in drink.

This much by way of introduction: now to consider the value and influence of public libraries in relation to the working classes. Who can tell the number of valuable inventions that have been lost to the world, because the workman in whose brain they were evolved was ig-

* Ald. Hallam's Pamphlet.

norant of the merest rudiments of theoretical mechanics? Every one who has tried his hand at model making from memory must, at some period or other, have been embarrassed by coming suddenly upon some part which requires a peculiar motion that he was unable to imitate till he had an opportunity to inspect his pattern again, when he would probably find some well-known principle brought into play, that he would never have thought of if left to himself. If this is the case with a mere model maker, how much more will it be true with an inventor? As an instance of this, we may suppose the case of a young man working in a cotton mill: while watching the machinery he is suddenly struck with an idea that if some few additions were made to the mechanism of a particular part, much labour might be saved or a better finish might be imparted to the goods. Fully alive to the value of this idea, he strives to make a model to demonstrate the practical application of the principle, but after repeated attempts, at length relinquishes his project in disgust. The probability is that if he had a manual of mechanics to which he could have referred, he would not have had to study long before he would have found the required principle explained, perhaps in a modified manner, but sufficiently clear for him to have adapted to his own requirements. In his ignorance of what had been thought out by previous students of mechanics, a brilliant idea has thus been lost because of his inability to grasp a well-known theoretical principle, which no one had seen the application of to this particular machine before. Had he explained his idea to the maker of the apparatus he was seeking to improve, it would have been seized upon and adopted immediately, but then the probability is that he would have lost the credit of his invention.

Many a man of more than average natural abilities as a poet or prose writer has never risen above mediocrity, or perhaps has been unable even to attain that, because before his style became formed

he had no facilities for perusing the works of classic authors. Had he been early acquainted with such works as those of Shakespeare, Addison, etc., he might have been able to attain a purer style than that which had become second nature to him before he studied their writings. How many self-taught students have struggled hopelessly with such impossible tasks as squaring the circle, or perpetual motion, who, had they been earlier convinced of the futility of their endeavours, might have passed them by, and devoted their energies to the accomplishment of other tasks, the completion of which would have encouraged them to proceed in their studies in which they might possibly have achieved a brilliant success. In their ignorance they had wandered from the beaten track till they had lost themselves completely. Such misdirected efforts only lead to ignominious failure, while, had they been better directed, they would have achieved considerable success. In bygone days the want of public libraries was in some measure supplied by the patronage system, and many men whose names occupy prominent positions in the history of the world of science, art, and literature, were taken in hand by noblemen, princes, and kings, and they were thus enabled to pursue their favourite studies with advantage. The present age, however, revolts at the idea of such patronage, even if patrons were to be found on the *qui vive* for *protégés*. In later times, gentlemen who had collections of valuable scientific and theological works have been found ready to lend their treasures to poor students, who by this means have been able to pursue their studies with a degree of success that would have been out of the question but for the assistance thus afforded. Many persons will doubtless be able to recall to mind the name of John Edwards, the Banff naturalist, who, though he never rose above the position of a poor shoemaker, yet he did great things and achieved a proud position for himself as a naturalist. He acknowledged with gratitude the benefits he derived from various works which were

lent and presented to him by admirers of his industry and zeal; he frankly admitted that these works saved him from falling into many grave errors and were of vast assistance to him while prosecuting his researches in the various matters to which he devoted himself.

It may be said with reason that these are exceptional instances of the value of books and that every man is not destined to shine as an inventor, a poet or a naturalist. While admitting this, I think every one will be forced to allow that in matters of every-day life Canada would be a gainer if she enjoyed the benefits of free libraries, as a few evenings spent in the intelligent perusal of Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," Hallam's "Constitutional History," Macaulay's and Carlyle's essays on the great political movements of past ages, would give the reader an insight into the principles of political economy and the logical sequences of various political arguments in use in every-day life. This would enable them readily to see through the specious, threadbare arguments of pot-house politicians and the sophistries of self-constituted but ignorant wire pullers, and would do much to create a more healthy tone in political life than obtains even in the midst of the enlightenment of the present day. The daily newspapers which might be read in a free library would keep the young man *ancourant* with contemporary history, from which the intelligent reader would be able to draw his own conclusions. A free library in the city of Toronto would also be of inestimable value if considered as a mere pleasure resort, where young men might go to pass the time in novel reading. Those who had charge of the institution would, of course, take care that its shelves were kept free from the pollution of such trash as too frequently forms the staple mental food of the rising generation. This would be a great advantage to any city, in many ways. In the first place it would serve as a counter-attraction to the tavern, out of which it would tend to keep the young men of an evening, and they would thus be gainers in pocket

and health. Secondly, the acquaintance with works of a higher moral tone, and evincing greater literary ability than those they are in the habit of studying, would have a tendency to raise and purify their ideas of human nature, and impart a more healthy idea than can possibly be derived from the perusal of "Dick Turpin," and such reprehensible works of fiction. So that the community would be benefited all round; the student would there find assistance in his studies, and a means of suitable relaxation from his more serious pursuits; the mechanic and man of business would be enabled to form an acquaintance with the literature of the age; while the mere idler would unconsciously become ingrafted with better principles of morality, &c., and probably be weaned away from reprehensible pursuits by having admission to a place of resort on wet evenings, and find amusement without the necessity of standing drinks or imbibing them.

The second point to be demonstrated is "the extent to which working people avail themselves of public libraries where they already exist." No one who has been in the habit of frequenting public libraries can doubt that the working classes form the bulk of the patrons of such institutions. This is strikingly shown by the fact that during the noon-day meal time and after working hours, every seat will be found occupied, while during the other part of the day the place is comparatively deserted.

The next point is "the character of the books usually read by this class of readers." Some idea of the extent to which free libraries are patronized, and the class of books usually read, can be formed by glancing at the figures compiled by Ald. Hallam in his pamphlet on this question. He tells us that in the Manchester free library there are 147,631 books, 64,077 of which are works of reference, and 83,554 are kept for lending purposes. The monthly average of reference books consulted was 19,058, while the number lent during the same period was 71,411. The annual cost of the books and maintenance

of this library is £11,000, of which sum £650 is expended in magazines, newspapers and periodicals. The Bradford (Yorkshire) free library is similarly divided into reference and lending departments, the former of which contains 11,152 volumes, and the latter 13,401, in addition to which there is another branch containing patent specifications lent by the government. The total number of consultations of reference books in one is set down as 217,598; the issues from the lending department during the same period amounted to 1,081,871, while the 8,000 books of specifications also proved fairly attractive, they being consulted no less than 11,355 times during the year. The annual expenditure on books and maintenance of this institution amounts to £3,000, and the news rooms to £120. The library rate levied on that borough realizes £3,200, at 1d. in the pound. There is also in the town an art museum, established under the Public Libraries and Museums Act, and in ten months the number of persons admitted to it was 132,261. Liverpool also has a well-patronized reference library, the daily average of consultations of the works on its shelves being no less than 2,057; the number of volumes in the lending departments is 43,285, and the issues during the year were 436,415. The daily average issue of magazines was 231; the average of weekly periodicals, 213,975, or 760 per day; there is also a stock of patents for inventions volumes, which during the year were consulted 13,913 times. The Birmingham free library, which was recently destroyed by fire, now contains 44,000 books; the monthly average of works lent out is 35,000, while the number consulted for purely reference purposes is on the average 21,700 per month. The library rate here realizes £6,000 a year, which has to cover the re-erecting of the building and maintaining it. The Preston free library was founded in 1879, and now contains 9,073 volumes, 200 being reference works. The monthly average of books lent is 8,000, and of books referred to, 200. The annual cost of this institution

is £1,000, and the cost of the news room in connection with it is £60; attached to the library is a reading-room, well stocked with newspapers, magazines, etc., which, like the library, is chiefly patronized by working-class people.

The last point to be argued is "the probability of the acceptance of such libraries by the working people of Canadian cities." It would be an insult to the intelligence of every man, woman, and child in the Dominion to suggest that any opposition will be offered to the scheme for the establishment of free libraries upon the old hackneyed ground that education will make the people too proud to work, as its fallacy has been demonstrated years ago. The only ground of objection, I opine, would be based on the score that its adoption would be too costly for the finances of the country at present. It must be admitted that there is reason in this, and men who have worked hard to accumulate a competency may be excused if they look twice at a dollar before they part with it. They say that they had to purchase what books they required for themselves, and ask why the youths of the present age cannot do the same, quite ignoring the fact that while they had sufficient foresight to do this, hundreds were not so wise, and have struggled on through life in the same beaten track, and have ended life scarcely better off than they began, without having enriched the world with a single idea worth recording, or having performed a single noble deed in their lives. They ignore the fact that there are numerous books that young men have perhaps never heard of, but which would be read with avidity if they were placed before them on the shelves of a free library. Many young persons hesitate to purchase a book for themselves, which they would read through in a week, and make all the excerpts they needed, though such might be of life-long service to them. There can be no doubt that sooner or later a free library must be established in Toronto, and the most the obstructionists can hope to do is to retard its acceptance for a time.

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